

AN  
INQUIRY  
RESPECTING THE  
SELF-  
DETERMINING  
POWER OF THE  
WILL;

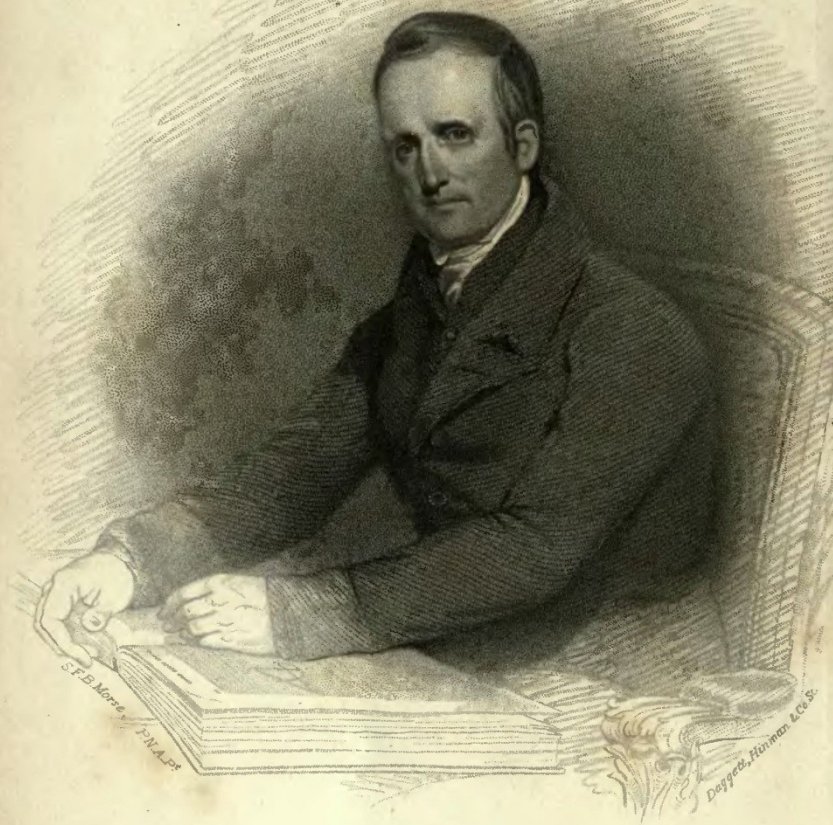
OR

CONTINGENT  
VOLITION.

SECOND EDITION,

WITH ADDITIONS  
AND ALTERATIONS.  
BY JEREMIAH DAY,

LATE PRESIDENT  
OF YALE COLLEGE.



REV. JEREMIAH DAY, S.T.D.L.L.D.  
PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

*Jeremiah Day*

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## CONTENTS.

### INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

Review of Cousin  
President Edwards on self-

determination

Moral government of God

Testimony of Scripture

Ambiguous phraseology

Figurative language

Acrimonious controversy

## SECTION 1: POWERS OF THE MIND.

Cause and effect

Dependence

*Efficacy* of a cause

Complex cause

*Efficient* causes,

Physical and Moral causes

Negative causes

*Every* change has a cause

Contingence

Popular meaning of













Is the *efficacy* of motives  
from the mind ?

Willing *against* motives

Are volitions determined  
by the understanding ?

Do they always conform to  
the strongest motive ?

## SECTION 4: LIBERTY AND NECESSITY.

Common notion of liberty

Internal freedom

Willing as we please

Liberty of contingence

Moral freedom

Contrary meanings of  
liberty

Power of contrary choice

Cousin's view of this



liberty

Liberty considered a  
privilege

Necessity is the opposite of  
liberty

Philosophical necessity

Various meanings of both  
liberty and necessity

Natural and moral  
necessity

Is certainty necessity ?

Edwards on moral  
necessity

## SECTION 5: ABILITY AND INABILITY.

Inability in relation to  
external conduct

Natural and moral inability





# CONSCIOUSNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Consciousness of power

Are we conscious of self-determination ?

Liberty *to either side*

Accountability

Power to will the contrary

Does liberty to either side lie in the affections ?

Is contingency essential to accountability ?

Originating volitions

Can a man *avoid* willing as he does ?

## SECTION 7: COMMON SENSE.

Customary use of the  
phrase

Philosophical use

Application to  
philosophical speculations,

Remarks of President  
Edwards

Decisions of common sense  
respecting volition

Decisions of common sense  
respecting motives

Decisions of common sense  
respecting accountable  
agency

SECTION 8:  
MECHANICAL AND  
PHYSICAL AGENCY.

Is the will a mere machine?





Is sin the means of the greatest good ?

Can the greatest good be obtained *without means* ?

Are there *any limits* to the power of God ?

Is the highest *supposable* good attainable ?

Happiness of God

Three different theories of the origin of evil

Agreement of the three suppositions

Their difference

## SECTION 10: ACTIVITY AND DEPENDENCE.

Ambiguity of the terms active and passive











# AN INQUIRY, &c.

## INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

*Review of Cousin—  
President Edwards on self-  
determination — Moral  
government of God —  
Testimony of Scripture —  
Ambiguous phraseology —  
Figurative language —  
Acrimonious controversy.*

SOON after the  
publication of Henry's  
translation of Cousin's

Psychology, I undertook to write a review of the work, for the Christian Spectator. Before coming to the chapter which treats of the Freedom of the Will, in the latter part of the book, the review had already been extended so far, that there was not room left to do justice, at that time, to so difficult a subject. It was, therefore, passed without notice. I have since been apprehensive, that from this omission, an inference, might perhaps be drawn, that I acquiesce in the opinions there presented by Cousin. Long continued

ill health, and urgent official engagements, have prevented an earlier expression of my own views on the subject. In endeavoring to give it a fair examination, I have not thought it necessary to confine my observations to a review of Cousin. The self-determining power of the will is a subject which is intimately connected with many of the theological discussions of the present day. Yet there are reasons for believing that it is not, in all points of view, generally and clearly understood. President













harmony and brightness through the heavens, but cannot control the heart of man. The rewards and punishments which he distributes to the subjects of his moral kingdom, can have no efficacy in favor of obedience. *Human* means also for the prevention of vice, and the promotion of holiness in others, must be entirely unavailing, if they can have no influence in determining the acts of the will. To what purpose are the restraints of education, the injunctions of parental authority, the admonitions of friendship, the sanctions







appealing to the authority of the scriptures, on the question respecting a self-determining power of the will. They will, of course, be so explained, as to express a meaning in conformity with the principles assumed. This is my apology for making an application of dry metaphysics to a subject so nearly connected with one of the most important departments of scriptural theology. Those who are prepared to receive implicitly the divine testimony, just as they find it on the sacred page, may









the terms in mathematical science. The value of a discussion upon any point connected with the freedom of the will, must depend, in a great measure, upon the skill with which the writer disengages the subject from the ambiguities of language which meet him at every turn. This is not to be done, by avoiding the *use* of such terms as have various meanings. For he will find no others belonging to this department of knowledge. The art of rightly using ambiguous terms, consists in so introducing and





among Christians are often greatly magnified, by the diversity in the phraseology to which the opposing parties are severally accustomed. They frequently agree in their opinions, while they differ in the language which they use to express them. Jealousy, and alienation, and division may be removed, by explaining the ambiguity of theological terms. On the other hand, there may be important differences of opinion, among those who agree in the use of the same form of words. A man who is

deviating from scriptural truth, may avail himself of long established and approved phraseology, for the purpose of concealing erroneous views, which, if prematurely disclosed, might excite suspicion and alarm. There is a wide difference between using ambiguous language *from necessity*, and using it *of choice*. In the one case, the writer endeavors to guard, as much as possible, against misapprehension. In the other, to render the meaning dubious, is the very purpose for which the ambiguous terms are









contention, a man does not always stop to consider, whether the figures which he uses have all the precision that is requisite to secure them from misinterpretation. He regards more the keen edge of his weapons, than the unerring aim with which they might be directed. "Logic set on fire," is better fitted to make a popular application of principles already established, than to disengage an intricate subject from the mazes by which the truth is concealed; — to bring it forth into clear and open





of attempting to make myself understood, though it may be with a sacrifice of some of the ornaments of style.

The subject of our inquiry has important relations to almost every part of doctrinal and practical theology. But in attempting to examine a single point, I have not thought it necessary to write a whole system of divinity. Though it will be requisite to refer, occasionally, to several kindred subjects, for the purpose of illustration, and to obviate objections ; yet it is desirable to avoid



## SECTION 1: POWERS OF THE MIND.

*Cause and effect — Dependence — Efficacy of a cause — Complex cause— Efficient causes — Physical and Moral causes — Negative causes — Every change has a cause — Contingence — Dependent contingency — Absolute contingency — Power — Mental powers — Classification of Mental powers — The will — Volition — Emotions.*

THE point proposed for





CONSEQUENT *of something upon which it* DEPENDS.

Between a cause and its effect, there is always the relation of antecedent and consequent. But

antecedence is not the *only* element, in the notion of a cause. There must also be *dependence*. The darkness of the night precedes the light of the day. But the darkness is not the *cause* of the light. The one does not *depend* on the other. Every change in the universe, at any one moment of time, is the immediate antecedent of every change which takes place in the

succeeding moment. But every one of the former changes, is not the cause of every one of the latter.

One thing *depends* on another, when the one exists on account of the other, and when, without the other or something equivalent, it would *not* exist. This implies, that there is that, in the nature and relations of the antecedent, which *secures* the existence of the consequent. It is what is called *efficacy*, in reference to the cause; and *dependence*, in reference to the effect. An *event*, or



*not* that of antecedent and consequent, of cause and effect; thus, the quantity of surface on a globe, depends on the length of the diameter. Any change in the diameter would make a difference in the surface. The ground of dependence, here, is the geometrical relation of the parts of the globe. The velocity of a given body, moving without resistance, depends on the force with which it has been impelled. Any change in the impelling force would make a change in the velocity. This is

dependence of *an effect upon its cause*. A mathematical theorem depends on the definitions and axioms by which it is demonstrated. This is a logical dependence of *a conclusion upon premises*, not of an effect upon its causes. In all these cases, the dependence is certain, though the *grounds* of it may be very different. One thing depends upon *several* others taken together, when it is the consequence of these, but without the united influence of them all, it would not be what it is. One thing depends *in*

*part* on another, when this is *one* of two or more antecedents, upon which, taken collectively, the consequent depends. The tides of the ocean depend partly on the position of the moon, and partly on the place of the sun in the heavens. That on which something in part depends, may be what is called *causa sine qua non*, a condition *without* which it cannot be; and *with* which it may, or may not be. A man's existence is a condition, without which he cannot be a scholar, and with which he may be either learned or



*depends, that it is the ground and reason, either in whole or in part, why it is rather than not; or why it is as it is, rather than otherwise.” [Edwards on the Will, Part II, Sec. 3.]*  
*“Dependence on the influence of a cause is the very notion of an effect.” [Ibid. Part II, Sec. 8.]*

Even Dr. Thomas Brown, who has written largely on this subject, though he asserts, that the only essential circumstance of causation is invariableness of antecedence and consequence; yet uses language which implies,



that in this expression, he includes what is commonly meant by dependence, efficacy, influence, &c. He employs the very terms *efficacy* and *efficiency*, as synonymous with power. He says, that “to be that which *cannot* exist, without being instantly followed by a certain event, is to be the *cause* of the event, as a correlative term.” He evidently does not intend to *exclude* dependence, efficacy, &c., from our notion of causation; but seems to suppose, that they are, of course, *implied* in “a sequence so invariable,



*combined influence* of several. All the circumstances upon which the effect depends may be considered as a *complex* cause. If any one of the antecedents be wanting, the effect may fail. If either the soil upon which grain is sown, or the rain, or the sunshine be deficient, an abundant harvest will not be gathered. The influence of the several parts of a complex cause may be very various. In the formation of the rainbow, the sun has an agency widely different from that of the cloud. If external *motives* are, in any



follow from that alone, without the concurrence of others.

Some writers speak of *efficient* causes, as being a distinct class. But all real causes are so far efficient, or efficacious, that they are antecedents on which, in part at least, effects depend. That on which nothing depends is no cause. Dugald Stewart makes a distinction between *efficient* and *physical* causes; meaning by the former *real* causes, and by the latter, those phenomena in the material world which *appear* to be

causes; though it is possible, that they are not truly so. Others appear to intend by an efficient cause, an *immediate* antecedent, in distinction from one which is remote, and which produces effects by the intervention of other causes. Some consider an efficient cause to be that which gives existence to a *substance*, either matter or mind; or which produces some change in the nature of a substance. Others apply the term to an *agent*, to one who gives existence to volitions. Some distinguish between







waters. The withdrawing of his beams, in the winter, is followed by the freezing of the waters: because they are then left to the uncontrolled agency of the positive causes of congelation.

The axiom, that every change implies an adequate cause, is a primary element of human thought. It has all the characteristics of a fundamental truth. It is *intuitive*, requiring no course of reasoning to prove it. It is *irresistible*; no power of argument can overthrow it. It is *universal*; compelling the



antecedent. But that which *begins* to exist, or which is subject to any change in the *mode* of its existence, requires a cause of that change; some antecedent, on which it depends for being what it is. It is not sufficient to say, that there is no *effect* without a cause. This may be admitted by those who affirm, that there may be *changes* which are not effects, and which therefore have no cause.

## CONTINGENCE.





dependence on the will of the Creator, is the very relation which the word is employed to express.

But in popular use, it is most commonly applied to cases in which something takes place, the immediate cause of which is *unknown* or *unobserved*. Yet even in this application of the term contingency, there is no intention of denying the dependence of events upon *some* cause. Thus the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, in their Confession of Faith, speak of the “contingency of second causes and to







and so far as it is dependent, it is not contingent. The very definition of this kind of contingency, renders it wholly incompatible with dependence. There can be no medium between the two conditions, unless it be, that a thing may be *partly* dependent, and partly contingent. If human volitions are dependent on nothing preceding, for being what they are, then they come to pass by perfect accident.

It is very important, that the difference between the popular and the





cannot discern, so as to foresee the event; but for something which has absolutely no previous ground or reason, with which its existence has any fixed and certain connexion.” [*Freedom of the Will, Part I, Sec. 3.*] A similar distinction is applicable to the corresponding terms accident, chance, fortuitous, &c.

## POWER.

A cause always implies an effect. By observing the

*relation* between these, we have the idea of *power*. The efficacy of the cause, its being of such a nature as to produce effects, is its power. In other words, *power is that, belonging to a cause, upon which the effects depend*. Though the term is primarily used to express the *relation* between the cause and its effects, yet it is frequently applied in such a way, as to appear to stand for the cause itself, or some part of the cause. The power of a substance to produce certain effects, may depend upon a *portion* only of the

substance, or upon some one of its qualities. The magnetic power of the loadstone is owing to the particles of *iron* which it contains. This, may be spoken of, as constituting the attractive power of the stone. Frequently also, power is considered as something *intervening* between the cause and the effect; a connecting link which is supposed to give efficacy to the cause. The harpsichord produces impressions on the ear, by means of vibrations in the air. The power of the instrument to affect the

ear, depends upon these vibrations. But in this case, there are, properly speaking, *two* causes, one immediate, the other remote. The motion in the air is the *effect* of the motion in the instrument, and the *cause* of the impression on the ear. Between an effect and its *immediate* cause, we know of nothing intervening.

Power is sometimes ascribed to *effects*, as well as to causes. The liability of a thing to be influenced by a cause, is called *passive power*, or more properly, *susceptibility* ; while the







when it possesses all the requisites for producing a particular effect, *except something which may be easily added*. We say that gunpowder has the power of exploding; meaning that it has this power when touched by a spark of fire. The fire is the additional element, which must form a part of the complex cause, before the effect will be produced. In speaking of *human* agency, we are accustomed to say, that a man has power to do anything, which he does *whenever he will*. The willing mind is all that is



antecedent on which the effect depends. This was evidently the meaning of the leper, when he came to Christ with the cry; “Lord, *if thou wilt, thou canst* make me clean.”

## MENTAL POWERS.

The powers of the *mind* are known, by what the mind *does*. Our own mental acts, our thoughts, our emotions, our purposes, are the objects of our consciousness. But every act implies an adequate cause. Whatever the mind





powers, is a subject of importance; yet not easily settled, if we may judge from the clashing representations of different philosophers.

One principal difficulty arises from the fact, that each considers his own method as the *only one* which is admissible. Now the truth is, that there is no one scheme of classifying the powers of the mind which is *essential*, to the exclusion of all others. Classification is a matter of convenient arrangement; and may be varied, according to the purposes to which, in

different cases, it is to be applied. The practical farmer has no occasion to classify his cattle, his grasses, and his grains, according to principles laid down in works on natural history. The architect does not find it necessary to arrange the materials of his masonry, according to mineralogical and geological distinctions. No particular mode of classification, is rendered necessary, by the laws of nature. It is true indeed, that in all attempts at classifying, the nature of things is to be regarded, so







in our mental operations. In classifying them, we can regard only the more prominent resemblances and differences.

## THE WILL.

There has been no settled agreement with respect to that most important faculty called the will. European writers generally confine the term to the power of *ordering* some bodily or mental act. Volition, according to them, is determining to *do* something. A man wills to





from the will; as though they were two faculties in the soul.” [*Revival of Religion in New England, Part I.*] “The affections are no other than the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul.” [*Treatise on Religious Affections, Part I.*] “The affections are only certain modes of the exercise of the will.” [*Treatise on the Will.*] But although emotions, purposes, and executive volitions are, in some respects, similar; yet, in other respects, they are different. Emotion is









## SECTION 2: SELF-DETERMINATION.

*Point of inquiry — Particular determination of the will — It is the mind itself that wills — One act of the will determining another — Are volitions determined solely by the nature or state of the mind? — or by the power of willing — Contingent determination — Spontaneous volition — Personality of the will — Originating volition — Is the mind the efficient cause of its volitions? — Causing*





almost every step of our progress. Such is the unsettled condition of metaphysical phraseology, that we can scarcely make any advance in an argument, on the subject before us, without stopping continually, to explain the meaning of ambiguous terms.

The object of our inquiry, is not to learn whether the mind wills at all. This no one can doubt. Nor is it to determine *why* we will at all. The very nature of the faculty of will implies, that we put forth acts of will. But the real point of our











another. To account for a man's willing at all, it is sufficient to state the requisites which are *common* to all cases of willing. To explain the ground of his willing in a particular way, it is necessary to add the considerations which give to his choice this special direction. On the question why does a man will at all, the parties in a philosophical controversy may be *agreed*, while they are altogether at variance, in giving the reasons for his choosing one thing rather than another. The latter









Farther, the emotions themselves are commonly excited, either by *perceptions* of external realities, or by the internal imaginings of our own minds. Imperative acts of the will, then, may be preceded by purposes, the purposes by emotions, the emotions by perceptions, or the workings of imagination. But all these belong to the mind. They do not reach beyond ourselves. So that, thus far, our emotions and volitions may be truly said to be self-determined.

Again, *present* acts may















influences, &c. ? This might be supposed to be the case, if the volitions of the same individual were all *perfectly uniform*. But they are very multifarious. One hour, he chooses to be active; another, to remain at rest. At one time, he is struggling against calamity; at another, exulting in the success of his plans and efforts. Why such frequent changes, if external circumstances have no influence on his actions ?

The present nature of the mind is either *original* or *acquired*, or has been given by the Spirit of God. In









wills, because he has not the power to *avoid* willing, in some way or other. But whatever may be assigned as the reason why he wills at all, the main inquiry will still return upon us: Why does the mind will one way rather than another; why does it choose one object rather than its opposite? Is the simple power of willing the only cause of this ? Does a man choose to walk to church for no other reason than because he has power to walk in any one of a thousand different directions ? Does he speak the truth for no other

reason, than because truth and falsehood are equally in his power? The mere power of willing is no more concerned in giving direction to the acts of the will, or in *preventing* them from being directed by influence, than is the equal weight of the arms of a balance in directing their motion, when unequal bodies are placed in the opposite scales. If the mind wills *contingently*, that is, without any direction from anything preceding; it undoubtedly has the *power* to will thus. But an equal power to will *any* way







*man* himself, but by the *volitions* themselves; that is, they are determined only by the *event*, by their happening to be what they are. They are dependent, for their character, on nothing preceding. The question, then, for our consideration is whether the volitions of accountable beings are *contingent*, or *dependent*; not whether they are dependent on the mind, objects of choice, &c., for coming into existence merely; but for being *such* volitions as they are, right or wrong, sinful or holy. The *mind*, it is

admitted, puts forth volitions; but does it determine *of what sort* they shall be ? Does anything *else* determine this ? Does anything else make any *difference* in the volitions? Or is it a mere matter of accident, that they are as they are ? If they are not dependent, they must be contingent, in the absolute sense in which we are now using the term. If they are not contingent, they must be dependent. For, from the very definition of the terms, one is the opposite of the other, There can be no *intermediate*



supposition, unless it be that they are *partly* contingent and partly dependent. If dependence is inconsistent with *liberty*, then so *far* as there is dependence, liberty is impaired; it is enjoyed only so far as volitions are contingent.

If the kind of volitions which a man puts forth, is to be ascribed to accident, in *what part* of the series of mental acts, does this prolific contingency, this wonderworking nonentity, “this effectual no cause,” do its work ? Where does it break the connection,



















controlling influence of our passions is the most manifest, and the most powerful.

But some writers, when they speak of the human mind as being endowed with a principle of *spontaneity*, seem to consider this as accounting fully for the particular direction of our volitions, independently of the influence of motives. This is a summary mode of settling a fundamental principle, by merely giving it a name, by taking for granted the main point in discussion. Another term





choosing ? Is it easier to prove, that the power of choosing can act independently of motives, than to prove, that a *being* possessed of this power can thus act ?

But, it may be asked, does not a man *originate* his own volitions? They undoubtedly *begin* with him, in this sense, that they have no existence, till *he* puts them forth. They are strictly *his* acts, and not the acts of another. They proceed *immediately* from him. They are not produced beforehand and afterwards put into his















lives, we are not accustomed to speak of him as being the cause of his sight, or feeling, or thought, or motion, or life; unless it be by something which he has previously done. Is there any more propriety in speaking of a man in the act of choosing, as being the cause of his choice ? Is not his agency in choosing the very choice itself? Does not the attempt to separate this into two elements, make the act of choosing both cause and effect? In the language of President Edwards, "To say that the mind determines





this can give them no warrant to claim that every *other* author shall use the term cause, as applied to the will, in the same sense; and shall be precluded from using it with any other meaning. It certainly can give them no right to charge an opponent with denying man's agency in his own volitions, because he does not call it by the name which they give it; because he considers this agency so essential to choice, as to be identified with the very act of choosing. Nor can they be justified in assuming, that









between Edwards and his opponents. They *agree* in the fact, that that which chooses is the mind of the agent. They *differ* in their explanations of the ground and reason of his choosing as he does. Neither side can settle the question, by giving their own meaning to the word cause, and *taking it for granted*, that this alone corresponds with the facts in the case.

A still different view has been taken of the term cause, as applied to volition. It is said that volitions are the *only* causes in the universe, at

least the only efficient causes; that while they are themselves uncaused, they are the causes of all the effects which are produced, in either matter or mind; that nothing which is a cause can be an effect; that in any series of consecutive and dependent changes, the *first* only is a cause, and that must be a volition, the others being merely effects. It must be admitted that a man has a right to say what *he* means by the word cause ; but he has no right to insist, that the various other meanings which have been customarily given to

















*difference*, on the subject of the cause of volition. He holds that a man's volitions are his *own* acts, not only as it is he that chooses, but also, as his imperative volitions are owing to his emotions, desires, &c., which are themselves owing partly to the nature and state of his mind, and partly to impressions made on it by external objects. He differs from his opponents, in believing that a man is not the *only* cause of his acts of choice, to the exclusion of all external influence.

The assumption that

volition has no cause but itself, that is, the mind in the exercise of choice, is in direct contradiction of the fundamental axiom universally received, except by a few sceptical philosophers, that every change whether of substance or modes, everything which *begins* to be, must have an adequate cause. This indubitable principle, broad as it is, is never stretched so far, by men of common understanding, as to embrace the supposition, that an event may be *the cause of itself*; that a man's











has had the magnanimity distinctly to avow his belief in it, and firmly to adhere to it, through a great portion of his book. It is upon this ground only, that he hopes to demolish the pillars of Edwards' work on the Will. It is, as he thinks, for the want of adhering steadily to this, that the other assailants of Edwards have so signally failed, in their efforts to dislodge him from his strongly fortified positions. Bledsoe's sword is a two edged weapon, which deals its blows, with impartial







statement of the doctrine in question.” p. 109. “If we suppose there is a real strength in motives, that they exert a positive influence in the production of volitions, then we concede everything to President Edwards.” p. 38. “Indeed, it seems to me, that while the notion that our desires possess a real power and efficacy, which are exerted over the will, maintains its hold upon the mind, the great doctrine of liberty can never be seen in the brightness of its full-orbed glory.” p. 104. “He does not, however, claim a

liberty of indifference for *our desires and affections.*”

“The liberty which we really possess, then, does not consist in an indifference of our desires and affections, but in that of the will itself.” p. 105.

If Mr. Bledsoe thus sets aside all prevailing influence which is antecedent to actual choice, he must, it may be thought, hold to a *self-determining power* of the will. By no means. “I have long been impressed with the conviction,” he says, “that the self-determining power, as it is generally

understood, is full of inconsistencies.” p. 211. “Difficulties have always encumbered the cause of free and accountable agency, just because it has been supposed to consist in the self-determining power of the will. We should therefore abandon this doctrine.—It is high time it should be laid aside for ever.” p. 212.

But if the will is determined neither by itself, nor by the influence of motives, by what is it determined, according to Bledsoe ? By nothing at all. “It has always been taken













cause. "It is true," he says, "that every change in nature must have a cause; that is to say, it is *in some sense* of the word an effect, and consequently must have a corresponding cause." p. 70. "No man in his right mind, ever ventured to deny that every change in nature, even the voluntary acts of the mind, must have a cause." p. 74. In *what sense*, then, has volition a cause ? It is not *the cause* of itself. "Did any man, in his right mind, ever contend that a volition could produce itself, can arise out of nothing, and

bring itself into existence? If so, they were certainly beyond the reach of logic.— I have never been so unfortunate, as to meet with any advocate of free agency, either in actual life or in history, who supposed that a volition arose out of nothing, without any *cause* of its existence, or that it produced itself. They have all maintained, with one consent, that the *mind* is the cause of volition.” p. 71.

*In what sense*, is the mind the cause of its own acts of choice? It cannot, according to Bledsoe, be the *efficient* cause. “The









which it is produced.” p. 81.

But if volition has no efficient cause, how is it to be accounted for? According to Bledsoe, *it comes to pass*, “If we mean by an effect, everything that comes to pass; of course a volition is an effect, for no one can deny that it comes to pass.” p. 47. It *arises* in the mind. “We are forced back upon the conclusion that action may and actually does arise in the world of mind, without any efficient or producing cause of its existence, without resulting

from the prior action of anything whatever. Any other hypothesis is involved in absurdity.” p. 58.

Is there, then, *any sense* in which volition has a cause ? “There is,” says Bledsoe, “a *sufficient ground and reason* for our actions; but not an efficient cause of them.” “No one ever imagined, that there are no *indispensable antecedents* to choice, without which it could not take place.” “Unless there were a mind there could be no act of the mind; and unless the mind possessed







this difficulty ? He does not place liberty on the broad ground, that the desires by which volition is supposed to be determined, are in reality nothing more than the *condition* or *occasions* on which the mind acts; and that they themselves can exert no positive influence or efficiency.” pp. 94, 95. “Having admitted that the sensitive part of our nature always *tends* to produce volition, and in some cases irresistibly produces it, the advocates of free agency have not been able to maintain the doctrine of a perfect



liberty, in regard to all human action.” p. 103. “The mind is endowed with various appetites, passions and desires,—with noble affections, and above all, with a feeling of moral approbation and disapprobation. These are not the 'active principles' or the ‘motive powers,’ as they have been called;— they exert *no influence* on the will. “We act according to *reason*, but not from the influence of reason.” pp. 216, 217. “ Reflection must show us, I think, that it is absurd to suppose that any desire, affection, or



the mind chooses an object which is before it, rather than one which is not in its view.

After all, he seems to hesitate to adopt the unqualified conclusion, that motives have no concern in giving direction to our acts of choice.

*Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret.*

The various appetites, passions and desires, with which we are endowed, he considers “the *ends* of our acting. We simply act *in order to gratify them*”—“We see that certain means must be used in order to















Whether this is, or is not, a correct interpretation of the statements in his book, it is the fundamental point, in discussions on the will. A vast deal of unavailing contention might be saved, if the parties on both sides of the controversy would agree to confine their arguments to this single question. The multiform evasions of the simple principle upon which a right decision of the subject depends, lead to interminable disputes, respecting the appropriate meaning and application of certain technical words and





## SECTION 3: INFLUENCE OF MOTIVES.

*Nature of motives — Internal and external motives — Are motives mere objects of choice ? — The strongest motive — Are motives the cause of volition? — Conditions and occasions of volition — Conditions of volition — Quotation from Mill's Logic — Are motives the efficient cause of volition ? — Are they the certain cause? — Is the efficacy of motives from the mind itself? — Willing against*





tendency to move the will in a particular way, at the same time, that a more powerful motive, may really move it in a different way.

There is an ambiguity in the use of the term motive, corresponding to the indefinite signification of the term will. In the language of some writers, a volition may be either an imperative act, a purpose, or an emotion. The motive to an imperative act, may be a wish to execute some previous purpose. The motive to a purpose, is the desire of obtaining some



object which is viewed as eligible. That which immediately excites the volition in this case, is an affection of the mind, an emotion, an *internal* motive. But that which excites the emotion itself, may be an object *without* the mind, an *external* motive. A tree loaded with fair and delicious fruit, excites desire in the beholder. This desire may move him to pluck the fruit. The fruit itself is an external motive. The desire which stimulates to the act of gathering it, is an internal motive. One act of

will, therefore, in the more enlarged acceptation of the term will, may be the motive to another act. The affections, which, by some, are considered as volitions, may be the motives to purposes and executive volitions. A motive, according to the common use of the term, must have some *tendency*, at least, either to excite desire, or to stimulate to action; though this tendency may often be counteracted and overbalanced, by motives of an opposite nature.

A mere *object*, which is apprehended by the











assertion, that motives are the cause of volition, ought not to be made, without many qualifications. That external motives are the *sole* cause is certainly not true, if the word cause be used to signify *every* antecedent on which the effect depends. Motives do not produce volitions without a mind. They are not the *agent*. They do not love and hate, resolve and choose. External motives are not of such a nature, that volitions of a certain character invariably proceed from them, independently of the



nature, and state, and feelings of the mind, which acts in view of them. But if a motive has any influence on the determination of the will, it is *one* of the antecedents on which the volition depends. Yet if it is an *external* object, it is not the *immediate* antecedent. An executive volition must be preceded by an *emotion*. This is an act or state of the mind. Before this emotion can be felt, there must be an *apprehension* of the object. This is also a state of the mind. Apprehension and emotion must both intervene, between the

external motive and the volition. The object, then, can have no influence on the volition, except by influencing the mind; in other words, there must be not only a motive, but an agent. The agent does not will without motives; nor do motives will without an agent.

It is frequently said, that motives are not the cause, but the *condition* or *occasion* of volition. This phraseology may be very proper, provided it be granted, that volition is, in any degree, *dependent* on motives. It is immaterial,





the consequent volition to be one way rather than another: without them, there can be no choice; and where they exist, it is a matter of absolute contingency, whether the will complies with them or not.

The expression ‘conditions of volition’ *may* be used, and perhaps with propriety, to signify those qualifications, circumstances, opportunities, &c., without which the agent could not will at all, or could not will with respect to particular objects; but which have no























are presented, or whatever other motives may be before it, at the same time. Still, it may be true, that the same mind, or minds in every respect alike, in precisely the same state, in the same circumstances, and under the same influence of every kind, will certainly choose in the same way.

The concurrence of the mind, in giving efficacy to motives, is evident from the fact, that the *same* external object will excite in *different* minds very different feelings, and lead to very different choices.





borne down with affliction.

The diversity of effects produced upon different minds, by the same *external* object, is probably the reason why some writers ascribe the *efficacy* of motives to the mind itself. The true state of the case is, that the efficacy belongs to *both* ; or to the relation between one and the other. The influence of an external motive will vary, with the state of the mind to which it is presented. And the feelings excited in the mind will vary, as the objects before it are changed. If motives











settled purpose, apparently calm, but unyielding, which carries a man steadily forward, amid all the solicitations of appetite and passion. The miser's predominant inclination, brings all his other feelings in subjection to this. The inflexible determination of Howard, gave law to his emotions, and guided his benevolent movements. The triumphs of principle over passion are frequently seen, in the commanding influence which a settled propensity exercises, over feelings apparently more violent. A man's regard for













## SECTION 4: LIBERTY AND NECESSITY.

*Common notion of liberty — Internal freedom — Liberty of contingency — External liberty — Liberty to either side — Power to the contrary — Cousin's view of this — Cousin's analysis of the Will — Power of contrary choice — Decision of consciousness — No impossibility of contrary volition — Dr. Edwards on natural power to the contrary, and on natural and moral inability —*

















in different terms.

5. A more scriptural meaning of freedom, is an exemption from the controlling influence and bondage of evil propensities and passions.

*“He is the freeman, whom the truth makes free; And all are slaves beside.”*

This may be called, for distinction's sake, *moral* freedom. It is far from implying, that the acts of the will are independent of *all* antecedent influence. They are brought under the





















does liberty imply, that when a man wills a certain act, it is no more likely to follow, than the contrary act; that his limbs will as soon move against his will, as with it; in other words, that there is no dependence of his external actions upon his choice, no established connection between what he does, and what he wills to do; that with the *same volitions*, his actions might be different ? A man has power to move his hand in opposite directions. Does this imply, that his *hand* has power to move in opposite directions, *in*





















choice one way rather than another. The faculty of choosing or refusing particular objects implies some *knowledge* of the objects. A man can neither accept or reject that of which he knows nothing.

The other mental state referred to above is something which *influences* the will; which *inclines* it to choose one thing rather than another. Taking it at present for granted that, sometimes at least, there is such an influence, it is evident that this is very distinct from the mere *faculty* of willing. The latter

is equally balanced between opposite objects; while the former turns the scale, in favor of one or the other. If the expression "power of contrary choice" be employed to denote, sometimes the faculty, sometimes the directing influence, and sometimes both together, we need to be distinctly informed in *which* of these senses it is to be understood. It is idle to reiterate the ambiguous phrase, while no explanation is given of the meaning attached to it, by the writer or speaker.

The distinction between





























































motives, and at the same time, a power of acting in opposition to motives ? To this, it may be answered, that if the very nature of liberty of will, implies freedom to either side, then so far as this is controlled, and our volitions are determined by the influence of motives, by the state of the affections, or by any thing else, liberty is impaired. The saint in heaven, who is under the influence of such motives, as invariably excite in him holy volitions, has not the liberty of which we are now speaking. Contingence and











at random, without any regard to his feelings; that if these should urge him ever so strongly to go one way, his will would determine he should go in an opposite direction: that however much he might be pleased with obeying God, his volitions would lead him to disobey; would this be the perfection of liberty? Or suppose his volitions should spring up, without any cause, or reason, or influence whatever, either from within or from without; would this be the most desirable condition of his being ?



## NECESSITY.

That which is the *opposite* of liberty, is commonly called *necessity*. But as various significations have been given to the term liberty, and each of these may have its opposite; necessity also has a corresponding variety of meanings. As liberty in familiar use, signifies *doing as we will*; so necessity, as it is most commonly understood, is something which *prevents* us from doing as we will. It implies























attention to the *sound* of words, than to their signification. By common readers, the term necessity, however it may be applied by the writer, will be understood to mean that which is opposed to the will.

The expression *moral necessity*, adopted for the purpose of avoiding ambiguity, is itself ambiguous. It is frequently used to signify a high degree of *probability* merely; an *approach* to necessity, where there is not supposed to be any infallible certainty. The









established.” “Though volitions may be the effects of a bias of mind born with us, yet those volitions are *moral* acts, and *therefore* the necessity from which they proceed, is a moral necessity.” [*Essays on Liberty and Necessity*, pp. 13, 19.] The *effects* are called moral, because they are *themselves* right or wrong; but the *causes* are called moral, because right or wrong actions *proceed* from them. Dr. Samuel Clarke observes, that “moral necessity, in true and philosophical strictness, is not indeed



and *abstract* notion. If an expression which is so liable to be misinterpreted, is still retained in use, it ought to be employed with very great caution, and to be accompanied with such explanations as will effectually guard it against perversion. [See *Examination of Edwards, Sec. 2 and 3.*]

## SECTION 5: ABILITY AND INABILITY.

*Inability in relation to external conduct —  
Natural and moral*











two kinds of inability, one has been called *natural*, and the other *moral*. If there is anything besides want of inclination, which prevents a man from performing a particular act, he is said to be *naturally* unable to do it. If unwillingness is the only obstacle in the way, he is said to be *morally* unable. That which prevents a man from doing *as he will*, is natural inability. That which prevents him from doing *as he ought*, is moral inability.

In natural inability, that which is most properly



unwillingness, therefore, is opposition to the inability, and of course, cannot constitute a part of it. A son is prevented, by a perverse will, from obeying the orders of his father. There may be, at the same time, a severe struggle in his mind, between this perverseness and his apprehension of punishment, or the remonstrances of conscience, urging him to a contrary decision. But his fears of correction, or conviction of duty, are no part of the unwillingness which prevents him from obeying. They are as much

opposed to his moral inability, as to his disobedient perverseness. But in the case of *natural* inability, the opposition to the will belongs to the very obstacle which lies in the way of performing that which is willed. If a man desires to raise a weight for which his physical strength is insufficient, his inability is not in his will, but in that which is *opposed* to his will.

The distinction between natural and moral inability would be easily understood, if in its application, it were



will so; or because he *could not* will so, if he would ? The first part of the alternative implies that every volition concerning which inability is predicated, is preceded by another volition. The other part implies, that the will may be opposed to itself. What then *can* be the meaning, when it is said, that a man is unable to will as he ought ? On this point theologians are not agreed. According to President Edwards, “Moral inability consists either in the want of inclination, or the strength of a contrary









Some writers define moral inability, to be that kind of inability which is consistent with *accountability*, with desert of praise or blame. This would be well enough, if we were agreed respecting the kinds of inability which are to be considered as consistent with accountability. But the definition ought not to embrace controverted points; especially when it is known, that many earnestly contend, that *all* inability is inconsistent with accountability. Even President Edwards'



definitions of moral inability, which it is not necessary to introduce in this place.

No way has yet been devised, by which the difficulties connected with this subject may be wholly avoided. There are violent and long continued controversies, with respect to the inability of the will, among those who appear to differ very little in opinion, except as to the meaning of terms. One class use the word power, and the corresponding expressions in their greatest latitude, to include *all* the antecedents













produce the effect. If the strength of ten men be necessary to raise a given weight, a single individual cannot do it; and therefore, in one sense, he has *no power* over the weight. But in another sense, he may be said to have *some* power with respect to it, as he possesses a part of the strength which is required to raise it. In the controversy respecting ability and inability, one party applies the term power exclusively to the *aggregate* of the antecedents upon which the effect depends; the

other, to those which are necessary to accountability. According to the former, a man has not ability, unless he has a *willing mind*, as well as the other qualifications for doing his duty. According to the latter he has ability, if the want of a right will is all that prevents him from obeying. One side maintains, that that which is insufficient to effect the required change, is not properly called power; that it can be nothing more than *powerless* power. The other insists, that a man is not bound to do that which



















misapprehension respecting the meaning of moral inability is increased, when it is contrasted, as it commonly is, with *natural* inability; apparently implying that moral inability is not natural to man; that his unwillingness to do his duty, does not proceed from anything belonging to his *nature*. This is far from being intended, however, by those divines who most frequently make the distinction of which we are speaking. “When I use this distinction of moral and natural necessity,” says



will *certainly* prevent particular actions, while the latter interposes such a difficulty merely as will *probably* prevent them. And when they hear it asserted by others, that there is no natural inability in the way of a sinner's repenting and doing his duty; they understand the meaning to be, that there is nothing, arising from his nature and the nature of things around him, which, without the renewing grace of God, will *certainly* prevent him from repenting and obeying. [See *Examination of*





## SECTION 6: CONSCIOUSNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

*Consciousness of power —  
In what sense are we  
conscious of self-  
determination ? — Liberty  
of indifference —  
Consciousness of liberty —  
Accountability in relation  
to external conduct — to  
acts of the will — to  
emotions — and to  
purposes — Is contingency  
essential to accountability?  
— Originating volition —  
Avoiding particular  
volitions.*







another preceding it. As both these are objects of consciousness, it may be proper to say, that we are conscious of the power of one over the other, but are we conscious that *every* act of our mind is preceded by another; that every volition is preceded by another volition ?

In what sense are we conscious of a *self-determining* power? A man is conscious that he wills or determines. This implies that it is *he himself* who wills; that his volitions are his *own* acts, and not the acts of another. So far we



















it; or if he takes a deep interest in her welfare, is he conscious, that this has no effect whatever upon his conduct ? Is the Christian conscious, that nothing but the power of contingent determination, has had any influence, in turning him from sin to holiness ? It is said, that we are conscious of *originating* volition. We are, indeed, conscious, that our acts of choice proceed from ourselves. They begin with us. They are not made elsewhere, and communicated to our minds. But does this imply, that nothing antecedent

has any influence, in determining of what nature they shall be ?

## ACCOUNTABILITY.

It is frequently asserted, that a self-determining power is essential to *accountability*; to a conviction of guilt; to a feeling of moral obligation. How can a man be justly blamed or punished, for doing that which he has no power to avoid; or for omitting that which he has no power to perform? Ought he to be condemned,



for doing as well as he can? No correct view can be taken on this point, without a distinct understanding of the meaning which is to be given to the expressions “no power,” and “self-determining power,” in this connection. There is no difficulty in knowing what is meant, when the language is applied to *external conduct*. All the world are agreed, that a man is not to blame for failing to walk, when he could not walk *if he would*. And for this plain reason, that his remaining inactive,











a matter of perfect accident, whether he loves or hates, rejoices or mourns; and that, so far as his feelings are owing to any influence from within or without, he is not accountable for them ? Or will it be said, that he can control his affections by his *resolutions* or commanding purposes ; and that this is what renders him accountable ? But are resolutions formed without any inducement; without any consideration which has an influence in determining what they shall be ?













are *his own* ; whether it is *he* that chooses ; or something else for him. The two suppositions agree in this, that it is the agent himself that wills. But according to the one, he chooses invariably as he pleases. According to the other, his volitions have no certain conformity to his feelings, desires, &c. They may as often happen to be in opposition to his wishes, as in accordance with them. How can he avoid the acts which spring up in his mind, with entire casualty ? To enable a man to avoid such volitions as



## SECTION 7: COMMON SENSE.

*Customary use of the  
phrase — Philosophical use  
— Intuitive truths —  
Application of common  
sense to philosophical  
speculations — Remarks of  
President Edwards —  
Decisions of common sense  
respecting volition, the  
influence of motives, and  
accountable agency.*

AN appeal to *common  
sense*, in behalf of a self-  
determining power of the  
will, is not unfrequently





with *intuition* ; the power of the mind to decide immediately respecting self-evident truths; a faculty which is common to all mankind, the learned and the unlearned. In public discussions, propositions ought not to be ranked with intuitive truths, unless, like mathematical axioms, they are *universally* admitted. That which is self-evident to one man, may not always be so to another. But for the purposes of controversial argument, some common ground must be agreed upon.











innocence or guilt of the accused? Would the court allow arguments of this nature to be addressed to them by the counsel ? Is it said, that the common people *take these things for granted*, as self-evident, and essential to freedom ? How can they take that for granted, which they do not even *think of* unless some speculating philosopher has made efforts, commonly unavailing, to introduce into their minds some of his finely wrought theories ? “The common people,” says Edwards, “don’t ascend up, in their

























addressed, that we hope to render our efforts successful. The way in which we endeavor to control *our own* future volitions, is by placing ourselves in such circumstances, and bringing into view such considerations, as will tend to incline our wills, in the direction which we wish. [*See Examination of Edwards, Sec. 15.*]

## SECTION 8: MECHANICAL AND PHYSICAL AGENCY.

*Is the will a mere*



WE sometimes hear it said, that if the will is directed by motives, if it is not a self-moving power, it is a *mere machine*. It is easy to use words without meaning. What is a machine ? It is commonly understood to be an instrument entirely composed of *matter*, having certain *movements*, and set in operation by a *material force*. Has the will or its acts any of these properties? Is it a material substance? Has it any bodily motions? Is it impelled by a mechanical force? Does a machine, like



be a machine ? Both have been *created*. Both are subject to *change*. Is the mind, therefore, nothing more nor less than a machine? The human understanding is unavoidably affected, by the objects in the world around it. Is it for this reason, a mere machine ? Is everything which is *like* another in *any* respect, to be called by the same name? Is man an elephant, because both have the faculties of hearing and seeing? Is the human mind a watch, or a clock, because its volitions *succeed* each

other, like the beats of a time piece ?

## PHYSICAL AGENCY.

Nearly allied to the objection which represents dependent volition as being mechanical, is another which considers such volition as being *physical* agency, rather than moral. The multifarious meanings of the term physical, render it difficult to determine what is intended by this objection. It is one of those pliable words, which may be made to mean one thing









gravitation, chemical  
affinity, electrical  
repulsion, mechanical  
equilibrium, the quantity  
and direction of impelling  
forces. Though matter may  
have an *influence* on the  
mind, it is not, so far as we  
know, in the way in which  
one body acts on another.  
The gold of the miser does  
not determine the acts of  
his will, by the same kind  
of force, as that by which it  
turns the beam of the  
jeweler's balance. The love  
of glory which inspires the  
warrior, does not move him  
on to battle, with an  
impulse of the same





conclude, that the human will, if it exist at all, has existed from eternity? The properties of matter have been *given* it by the Creator; are the attributes of the will, therefore, self-existent? Matter *continues* from one day to another; is it denied, that this is the case with the will ? The motions of a body are successive ; does it follow, that there is *no* succession in our volitions ; that they all take place at the same instant ?

Perhaps it may be thought, that the objection which we are considering,







without motives. A motive does not examine, compare, and choose. But do volitions come forth fortuitously, without being affected by any influence whatever ? Do they *depend* on nothing preceding for being as they are, rather than otherwise? Does it make no difference what motives are before the mind, when it is about to will ? The result of the same external influence, operating upon *different* minds, may undoubtedly be very different. But does this prove, that the difference in the volitions,









certainly is ambiguous. There is certainty of *knowledge*, and also a certainty in the nature and relations of *things*, which is the foundation of certain knowledge. That a sphere is two thirds of its circumscribing cylinder, was a certain truth, long before it was discovered by Archimedes. Certain knowledge of any truth implies, that it is a certain truth. It is certainly known, *because* it is certainly true. Some metaphysicians maintain, that volitions which are neither certain in themselves, nor certainly

dependent on anything preceding, but wholly contingent, may, nevertheless, be certainly foreknown. President Edwards was of a different opinion. "Metaphysical or philosophical necessity," he observes, "is nothing different from their certainty." But to prevent misapprehension, he adds, "I speak not now of the certainty of *knowledge*, but the certainty that is in *things themselves*, which is the *foundation* of the certainty of the knowledge of them." "There must be a certainty in things









which is, in the absolute sense, contingent. It is *objective*, and not merely *subjective* certainty. “No doubt knowledge in the Deity, is the same thing with *subjective* certainty, or certain knowledge ; but it is not the same with *objective* certainty, or the truth which is the object of the divine knowledge.” [Pg 151]

The term *physical*, even when taken by itself, is a word of very vague signification. But when it is combined with another ambiguous term, it forms a compound the meaning of which is still more



taking care not to annex to them any definite signification. The whole subject of the freedom of the will, may easily be thrown into utter confusion, by a liberal use of a few ambiguous words and phrases.

## **SECTION 9: MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.**

*Has the government of God any influence upon the human will? — Has his providence any concern in giving direction to volition? — Influence of*



*limits to the power of God? — Is it certain that the highest supposable good of the universe is actually attainable? — Happiness of God — Three different theories to account for the origin of evil — Agreement of the three suppositions — Difference of the suppositions.*

THE deep interest which belongs to the subject of contingent self-determination, lies in its relation to the *moral government* of God. This, in the more enlarged acceptation of the term, is

commonly understood to mean that system of dispensations, by which he not only distributes rewards and punishments to the righteous and the wicked; but exerts an *efficacious influence* in favor of holiness, and in opposition to iniquity. It implies that, in some way or other, he has the power of giving a direction to the volitions of his creatures; of securing some in a course of uniform obedience, and recovering others from the dominion of sin. The great question before us is, whether he

















purpose is to be answered, by the manifestations of majesty, and justice, and grace, in the retributions of *the judgment day* ; if they are to have no effect to bind the heavenly hosts in firmer bonds of love and gratitude, and allegiance to their Maker ? Of what avail are all the terrors of the eternal prison, if they have no tendency to deter others from disobedience and revolt. Would a God of infinite compassion inflict punishment on his creatures, even when it is deserved, if it could have no effect in maintaining the









of the will is effected, by his agency, there is no room left for the determining power of contingency. But if this has absolute control, neither the providence of God, nor his government and laws; neither the mercy of the gospel, nor the terrors of his throne of judgment; neither his word nor his Spirit; nor all these together, can have efficacy sufficient to secure the decisions of the will. No accumulation of power comes any nearer towards gaining the point. The greater the controlling influence, the greater the











But if motives have no tendency to affect the decisions of the will, all this array of precepts and penalties, of promises and threatenings, of representations of heavenly glory, and the hopeless doom of the finally impenitent, is devoid of all efficacy, for the promotion of holiness, and the prevention of iniquity. It has no influence which can reach the empire of contingency.

**AUTHOR OF SIN.**







very nature of a moral agent, to be liable to sin by accident ? Who gave to man this nature, from which contingent volitions proceed ? Did not the author of our being *foresee* that, with such a nature as he gave us, and in such a world as that in which he placed us, we should not only be liable to sin, but should actually sin? If the millions of millions of volitions which are put forth every moment, are all perfectly contingent; that is, if there is an even chance, with respect to each one, whether it will be



*objects* as might influence them to sin? Is he the author of sin, if he creates a being who will *certainly* sin? In our fallen world, it is certain that every rational creature of God will sin.

## PREVENTION OF SIN.

If the volitions of moral agents are under the control of the Creator, the inquiry may be made, why has he not wholly *prevented* the existence of sin? Perfect goodness must be displeased with all iniquity. If human volitions





*limit*, either to his *power*, or to his *goodness* ?

This difficulty does not press exclusively upon the opinion, that volitions are dependent upon something preceding, for being what they are. It bears upon the scheme of the objectors, as well as upon that of their opponents. Yet they bring it forward, and reiterate it, with an air of triumph which indicates their forgetfulness of the force with which it may be turned upon their own views. Let it be supposed, that volitions are contingent. It is generally











abundance are spread before us for our good, are our principal temptations to sinful indulgence. The plan which infinite benevolence has devised, for the salvation of our race, is, by multitudes, perverted to licentiousness. The long-continued forbearance of God, towards sinful men, to give them an opportunity of securing eternal life, is often so abused, as greatly to aggravate their guilt. The measures of the divine providence and government are not *all* employed in *preventing*

*evil*. Some must be directed to the attainment of *positive good*; and these may indirectly be the occasion of sin.

The doctrine, that God can control, at pleasure, the volitions of his creatures, does not necessarily imply, that he can do this *without means*. Do you say, that omnipotence can accomplish everything, by *any* means, or even with *no* means? Then surely *sin* is not the *necessary* means of the greatest good; he can effect his beneficent purposes without its aid. Is















with such motives before them, as are best calculated for attaining the highest good ?

For aught that we can tell, it may be necessary, in carrying into execution the purposes of infinite benevolence, not only that means should be used, but that there should be a *choice* of means; a selection of those which are better adapted than others to the great end proposed. And this system of means may be inconsistent with such a course of measures as would prevent the existence of all sin. This









without sin in others; and *in addition* to this, that those who are now lost would also be perfectly holy and happy? Has not God abundant reason to rejoice in his works, if the good in the creation immeasurably overbalances the evil ?

The three suppositions which have been mentioned here, respecting the origin of evil, are these:

1. That sin is the necessary *means* of the greatest good.

2. That sin is the natural *consequence* of a *moral system*; of *any* system of

voluntary agents.

3. That sin is the certain consequence of the *best* moral system; the system of divine administration which will result in the highest good of the universe.

In what respects do these three suppositions *agree*, and in what do they *differ* ? The advocates of each, it is presumed, will agree that the present system of the created universe, considered in all its results, in all worlds, and throughout all ages, is the *best possible* ; or at least, that none *better*, if another























answers a *better purpose*, than holiness in its stead.

The third supposition above differs from the *second*, in not representing the prevention of all sin as inconsistent with the nature of *accountable agency*. That it cannot be wholly prevented in the *best* moral system, we have the evidence of *fact*. It has entered a universe of accountable beings, under the government of infinite wisdom and goodness. But we have not this proof, that it must take place in every *supposable* system of voluntary agents. With

hypothetical systems, we have no practical concern. All our interests lie in that one which a God of boundless wisdom and benevolence has chosen; and which we therefore conclude to be the best possible.

In this real universe, we have abundant evidence, both from His word and His providence, that He *does* restrain sin; and therefore, that this interposition is not inconsistent with accountable agency. To what extent this prevention might be carried, in any





## SECTION 10: ACTIVITY AND DEPENDENCE.

*Ambiguity of the terms active and passive — Can anything be active and passive, at the same time? — Mental activity — Can volition be passive? — Can an agent be, in any sense, passive? — Can any being act, if he is acted upon? — Mr. Chubb on action and passion.*

To the supposition, that the will is dependent on anything without itself, for the nature of its volitions, it

is objected, that an accountable agent must be an *active* being ; that dependence implies, that he who is the subject of it is *passive*; and that these are *opposite* qualities, each being inconsistent with the other; so that he who is active cannot, at the same time, be passive or dependent. These are terms of very convenient ambiguity, with which it is easy to construct a plausible but fallacious argument. The word passive is sometimes used to signify that which is *inactive*. With this





the effect of the wind, may be the cause which buries the ship in the ocean. The stream of volcanic lava, which is the cause of ruin to fields, and herds, and villages, may be the effect of internal fires and vapors. The same thing is not both cause and effect, *in the same respect*. It is not the cause of its antecedents, nor the effect of its consequents. It is not passive, in the same sense, in the same *relation*, in which it is active. The axe is passive, with respect to the hand which moves it; but active, with respect to the



inactive; or if they think intensely, have our thoughts no dependence on the book before us? Is there no activity in the *passions*? Do they always burst forth without a cause? When a patriotic orator rouses his countrymen to deeds of heroism, is there no cause of their impetuous ardor ?

But can *volition* be passive? Must it not be altogether active? A volition is undoubtedly an *act*. The mind must, therefore, be *active* in willing; and if the term passive be used to signify simply that which is



*inactive*, the will cannot, *in this sense*, be passive, in the same exercise in which it is active. But this truism does not touch the question, whether volition is dependent, for being as it is, on anything preceding, and whether it is, therefore, *in that sense*, passive. The most active thing in the world may be passive, in the sense of being dependent for its activity on some antecedent. It may be caused to be active. This will be admitted, with respect to inanimate matter, if not with respect







active. Does it follow, that they cannot be passive, in the sense of being dependent on something preceding? Does the fact, that all activity in material things *must* have a cause, prove that activity of will *cannot* have a cause ? Do you say, that the man himself is the cause of his volitions ? Very true. But how does this agree with the assertion, that that activity which consists in willing has no relation to a cause ? Do you still insist, that the agent himself is active, and not passive ? Does this imply that he is





urged, that to suppose a man to be caused to act freely, is inconsistent with the *definition* of free agency? Would it not be more to the purpose, to endeavor to render our definitions conformable to the reality of things; rather than to take it for granted, that facts correspond with our arbitrary definitions? Dr. Reid appears to suppose, that that which is *acted upon* cannot act. Would he say, that the water wheel cannot act, when it is acted upon by the stream? I am aware that his observations were





preceding ; it is easy to see, that *such* agency, if such there ever was or can be, in the human mind, is inconsistent with being acted upon. But it ought to be understood, that a definition is not argument. It is of itself no proof. Though it may be the basis of an argument, yet something more is necessary, to justify us in drawing a conclusion. In all cases, except those in which our reasoning is merely *hypothetical*, it is essential to a good definition, that it correspond with *fact*. How,









nothing; that what are called acts of the understanding are, properly speaking, *no* acts; that the only appropriate meaning of action is volition, and that even this cannot be passive, in the sense of being subject to the influence of a cause. All this is preparatory to the final assumption, which is a complete *principii petitio*, that volition is independent of all directing influence from without itself.

Momentous consequences are deducible from these unwarrantable





the cause of nothing. Again, if nothing which is an effect can be a cause, then as all created things are effects, He who made them must be the only cause in the universe.

## SECTION 11: FATALISM AND PANTHEISM.

*Different forms of Fatalism — Many of the ancient Fatalists believed the acts of the will not to be determined by the Fates — Is there no middle ground, between Fatalism and the doctrine of contingent*

















medium between acknowledging the sovereignty of the Fates over the will, and admitting no control, but the dominion of chance ? The object of our inquiry is to learn whether moral acts are determined by accident. If they are not, does it certainly follow, that they must be subject to the Fates of the heathen ? Is the authority over the heart so divided between fate and contingency, that what is not ascribed to one, must of necessity belong to the other ? Is there no room left for any effectual

influence, from infinite wisdom and benevolence? [*See Examination of Edwards, latter part of Sec. 17.*]

*Pantheism.* — The suggestion that a denial of contingent self-determination leads to Pantheism, is as indefinite in its application, as the charge of Fatalism. The doctrine of Pantheism, as held by Spinoza and his followers, is that the universe is God; that all finite existences are only *modes* of the one infinite substance. With him agree substantially the Hindoo,

Persian, Grecian, and German Pantheists. With some diversity in the mode of representation, they concur in the statement, that all finite beings, both material and immaterial, either constitute God, or are parts of God; that there is but one substance in the universe ; that all the phenomena in the world are properties, manifestations, or developments, of the divine existence. These are sometimes spoken of as *emanations* from the substance of the Deity; parts separated from Him









## SECTION 12: TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

*Difficulty of settling the question before us by philosophical discussion — Appeal to scripture testimony — Upon what principle, are the scriptures to be interpreted? — How far are we to make their meaning conform to our previous opinions? — Does scripture ever contradict reason? — Has God any agency in determining the acts of the will? — He **causes** his people to do his*







phraseology, there is reason to suspect there may be some latent fallacy in the argument; that we want surer ground on which to rest our opinions, upon a subject of such momentous interest. This is the very result to which I have been aiming to bring the discussion. My object has not been to lay a *philosophical* foundation for religious belief; but to prepare the way for simple and confident reliance on the testimony of scripture. I have not undertaken to prove, by such arguments as must, at once, carry





to settle a controverted point, are we to take it for granted, that the meaning of the passages consulted must coincide with the decision which we have already formed in our own minds? What kind of reliance on the testimony of revelation is that which pre-judges the very case on account of which the reference is made ?

The scriptures, it must be admitted, are addressed to *rational* beings, to men capable of understanding *moral* truth. Without these faculties, they could not investigate the *evidence* by







who created the soul of man, and gave him all his power of forming and interpreting language, find no way of making himself understood, when communicating truths not previously discovered ? Does the faculty of knowing *something* on the subject of religion, without revelation, imply the power of knowing *everything*, without its aid. If we can learn something of the visible objects around us, by the faint light of the moon, does it follow that we can make no additional discoveries by the bright











and die on the cross ? Here is the probable decision of natural reason, contradicted by the certain evidence of inspired truth. If the result obtained by our reason alone, can never be contrary to revelation, because God is the author of both ; upon the same principle, the opinions of one man can never be opposed to the opinions of another; for the reasoning powers of all have been given by the same Almighty Parent.

If it be admitted, that the scriptures contain not only truths which may be

















spring forth before all nations.” [*Ezekiel 36:27; Isaiah 61:11*] Are these declarations consistent with the supposition, that righteousness and obedience are altogether self-determined; that God does not, in the proper sense, *cause* them to spring forth among his people; that at farthest, he does nothing more than render them *probable*, but not certain.

He is said to *incline* their hearts to obey him. “The Lord our God be with us,—that he may *incline* our hearts unto him, to walk in











to the Thessalonians: “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love.” “Make me to go in the path of thy commandments,” says the Psalmist. “The Lord *direct* your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ.” [*Isaiah 63:17; Psalm 119:35; 2 Thessalonians 3:5*]

The power of God over the hearts of men, is exercised according to the arrangements and purposes of his infinite wisdom. “Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered



wicked hands, have crucified and slain.” Joseph says to his brethren: “It was not you that sent me hither, but God.” [Acts 4:27, 28; 1Kings 12:15; Rev. 17:17; Acts 2:23; Genesis 45:8]

The purpose of God to *change* the hearts of men, and turn them from sin to holiness, is declared in distinct predictions. To the people of Israel, he promises thus: “I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. *A new heart* also







with *salvation*. “God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.” [*1 Peter 1:2; 2Thess. 2:13*]

The work of God, changing the heart from sin to righteousness, is represented as the exercise of *creative* power. “Create in me a clean heart,” says David, “and renew a right spirit within me.” “We are his workmanship, *created* unto good works.” [*Psalms 51:10; Eph. 2:10*]

The *continuance* of a religious life, as well as its commencement, is











*makes* them obedient, they really obey. If he *turns* their hearts to himself, they themselves turn to the Lord. If he gives them a new heart and a right spirit, they exercise the affections of a new and obedient heart. Not that the agency of God in renewing the heart, is identified with the agency of men; but the one is the *consequence* of the other, is *dependent* on the other. *His* turning them is not *their* turning. Their obedience is not his obedience. His giving them repentance is not their repentance. But

without his agency, they would not repent. His giving them a new heart, is not the same as their making themselves a new heart; but it is *causing* them to make themselves a new heart. His working in them, to will and to do, is not their working ; but it is *rendering* them willing to work out their own salvation. God, speaking to the Israelites, says, “I will *give* them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord ; for *they* shall return unto me with their whole heart.” [Jer. 24:7] “And that *ye* put on the new man,” says the





destroy them utterly.” Of Sihon, king of Heshbon, it is said, “The Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand.” Isaiah cries unto God and says, “O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?” [*Josh. 11:20; Deut. 2:30; Isa. 63:17*] God repeatedly declared to Moses, that he would harden the heart of Pharaoh, and the hearts of the Egyptians. “And the Lord said unto Moses, when thou goest to return















Do you say, that he left them to be hardened, under the course of his *providence*? Then the course of his providence, his *own* providential dispensations, had an *influence* on them. Is the declaration of the apostle, that “he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth,” consistent with the supposition, that God has no power to prevent the hardening of the heart? Is there no *distinguishing* interposition, in the case of those who are “vessels of mercy?” Do all these

















laws of accountable agency. Yet the government exercised over all created minds, is as much more important, than the regulation of the material universe, as the worlds of intelligent creatures, exceed in value the worlds of matter which they inhabit.

This is not a subject of barren speculation. It is intimately connected with some of the most important doctrines and duties of evangelical religion. Not only does the efficacy of *divine* influence on the hearts of men imply,



endeavors to induce others to turn from the practice of iniquity. To what purpose are religious instruction, and admonition, and exhortation, and entreaty, if they have no influence upon the feelings and purposes of the persons addressed? How can a preacher enter the desk, with any hope of success, if he believes, that the hearts of his hearers are controlled by the law of contingency ? Why should a parent attempt to guard his child against the allurements of vice, if temptation has no power to

influence the will; if warning has no efficacy in restraining from iniquity ? We ought not, indeed, to rely on any human means as being, of themselves, sufficient to produce holiness, without the accompanying agency of the Divine Spirit. But absolute contingency is as inconsistent with any efficacious operation of the Spirit of God, as with a determining influence from the efforts of men.

The belief that human volitions are not rendered sinful or holy by blind contingency, is in











influence from without, what ground of hope can there be, that the heathen world will yield their hearts to the calls of the gospel. If even the Spirit of God can interpose no determining agency, to stay the desolating tide of depravity, without violating the laws of accountable volition, how can we expect an answer to our *prayers* for the conversion of the world? If all the acts of the will are contingent; if they are equally liable to be holy and to be sinful; how can we hope for a *millennial age* of universal and









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